

STATE HISTORICAL  
SOCIETY OF IOWA  
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF CULTURAL AFFAIRS

# The Annals of Iowa

---

Volume 48 | Number 7 (Winter 1987)

pps. 472-473

---

## A Field Guide to American Windmills

ISSN 0003-4827

No known copyright restrictions.

---

### Recommended Citation

"A Field Guide to American Windmills." *The Annals of Iowa* 48 (1987), 472-473.

Available at: <https://doi.org/10.17077/0003-4827.9206>

Hosted by [Iowa Research Online](#)

been lost. Like the Nashville Agrarians he echoes, he sees the flaws in the modern age and the strengths of the bygone system. As agriculture wallows in depression throughout the country, and as the new-model "family farm" thrashes about in death agony, the issues Daniel raises take on a new cogency and relevance. *Breaking the Land* would be a good book any time; it is especially timely right now.

NORTH DAKOTA STATE UNIVERSITY

DAVID B. DANBOM

*A Field Guide to American Windmills*, by T. Lindsay Baker. Foreword by Donald E. Green. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1985. xii, 516 pp. Illustrations, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth.

*A Field Guide to American Windmills* is divided into two parts. The first, consisting of 111 pages, is the more interesting for the general reader. It is organized into sixteen very short, liberally illustrated chapters that cover the history, technology, and use of windmills in the United States. Orientation to the Midwest is especially strong, for that was where the device found its greatest popularity. The text is well written, although including a few labeled diagrams would have assisted readers in following the brief technical discussions that have been included.

Part two, the heart of the work, consists of an alphabetical listing and discussion of 112 windmill models ranging from the Halladay Standard, the first commercially successful windmill, to the well-known I.X.L. steel windmill, a fixture of the early decades on midwestern farms, to such oddities as the oil drum windmill, using fifty-five-gallon oil drums split in half as vanes. As in part one, the illustrations are profuse and are supplemented with pen-and-ink silhouette sketches. The text often provides little-known information and frequently in considerable detail given the limited format (each model is assigned only a page or two of space including illustrations).

Two appendixes round out the volume. They provide an exhaustive listing of windmill manufacturers, together with model identification features and the dates and places of manufacture.

Because of its wealth of research material, *A Field Guide to American Windmills* will undoubtedly become a standard reference source. Virtually every library, certainly in the Midwest, will want its own copy of this valuable work. But this does not mean that the volume is not without its shortcomings. Although carefully edited, the text does make occasional gaffes. On page 20, for example, the Caribbean Island of Aruba is given as "Oruba." More serious is a general lack of any reference to, or discussion of, European-type windmills that were built in

### Book Reviews

North America in considerable numbers in an earlier period. Baker also totally ignores the subject of domestic tank houses, which are so much a part of the cultural landscape of California and the far western Great Plains. Finally, the discussion of the exportation of American windmills to Latin America fails to include perhaps the largest market, that of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, where American-made windmills still dot the area and are used to draw water in this land where there are no surface streams.

These deficiencies do not materially detract from the value of the book. It is a superb work, lovingly put together by both author and publisher. It is an important work as well, documenting a material culture, landscape feature rapidly disappearing from the countryside.

UNIVERSITY OF AKRON

ALLEN G. NOBLE

*The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture*, by E. G. Alderfer. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985. xiii, 273 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$21.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper.

*The Salvation Army Farm Colonies*, by Clark C. Spence. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985. vii, 151 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$19.95 cloth.

Anyone interested in the history of intentional communities will find the volumes by E. G. Alderfer and Clark Spence welcome additions to the literature. Although neither book deals with an Iowa subject, both Alderfer's account of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and Spence's of Salvation Army farm colonies in California, Colorado, and Ohio, include discussions of the ideological and economic currents that fed not only these experiments but others throughout the country and abroad.

Several comparable communities have, in fact, been established in Iowa. The Amanas are justly famous as one of the longest surviving communal societies in American history. Less well known were several communities established along secular lines: the Icarian settlement near Corning, in Adams County, which lasted from 1865 to 1895; the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx, in Mahaska County, which flickered briefly for several months in 1844-45; and Communia, near Elkader, in Clayton County, which was founded in 1847 by Swiss and German socialists and disbanded in factional strife nine years later.

Ephrata was one of the most remarkable of several fascinating intentional communities in colonial America. Located fifty miles from Philadelphia, in Lancaster County, Ephrata was founded in 1733 by

Copyright of Annals of Iowa is the property of State of Iowa, by & through the State Historical Society of Iowa and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.